

# National History Day Web Sites

## What is a web site?

A History Day web site is a computer-based representation of your research and argument that incorporates both textual and non-textual content (e.g. images, songs, interviews, videos and other media) to engage and inform your viewer about your topic. A web site is more than just an electronic paper or an exhibit on a computer. Through a web site you are able to incorporate non-textual elements with which a viewer can interact. These elements help to differentiate web sites from other categories.

The web site category is the newest National History Day category, first appearing at the national contest in 2008.



## The Basic Framework

- **Size Limit:** The overall file size of your web site can be no more than 100MB of file space, including all multimedia.
- **Word Limit:** The web site may contain no more than 1200 visible, student-composed words. This means that the words that you write that are visible to the viewer count towards your word limit. If you didn't write it, it doesn't count towards the limit. You can use quotations from other sources and it won't count against your 1200 words. Words that are not visible to the viewer – code used to build the site and alternate text tags on images – do not count against the limit, either.

Examples of things that count...	Examples of things that don't count...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Captions</li><li>• Text in graphs, charts or timelines that you create yourself</li><li>• Words that you write that appear on your web pages.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reoccurring menus, titles and navigation instructions that are used as an integral part of the web site.</li><li>• Quotations</li><li>• Text in graphs, charts or timelines that you do <b>not</b> create yourself</li><li>• Brief text crediting the source of an illustration, quotation or piece of media</li><li>• Code used to build the site, and alternate text tags on images</li></ul>

- Be sure to check the most recent version of the **NHD Contest Rulebook** for complete category rules!

## Why Should I Choose the Web Site Category?

The web site category is great for people who enjoy working with computers and the web. If you've ever wanted to learn how to build a web site, now is your chance. While many topics can be effectively conveyed using the web site category, this category is especially suitable for topics that have a variety of non-textual materials (media, photos, documents, timelines, illustrations, newspaper articles, etc.) that can be used to support your argument.

Since this category requires additional equipment and supplies, you should make sure you have access to this equipment before you start. Do you, at home or school, have access to a computer with internet access? You will need to use the **NHD web site editor**, available online, to build and submit your website and you must have a computer with internet access to do this.

# Interactivity

A good History Day web site is not just a paper translated into HTML and viewed in an internet browser. Your site should actively teach viewers about your topic. Imagine that the viewer has just arrived at your site. How did you catch their attention and curiosity? How do you get them involved in learning about your topic? Your site should incorporate some interactive elements to help accomplish this.

## What are interactive elements?

There are many different interactive elements that you can include in your web site to engage your viewer in learning about your topic, such as image maps, pop-up windows, sound, videos, timelines or databases.

## Not all interactive elements are created equal

Make sure your interactivity helps interpret your topic. Interactive elements should give the viewer a better understanding of the information and ideas that you're presenting. For example, if your topic was a particular Civil War soldier, an interactive map that follows the path of the soldier's regiment would help the viewer understand where the events you're describing took place. On the other hand, a quiz that simply reviews factual information found elsewhere in the site would not interpret your topic because it would not provide the audience with a new understanding.

## Interactive elements don't have to be high-tech!

You don't have to be a professional web designer or have years of experience to incorporate interactive elements into your web site. Look at other history web sites to see how they engage their viewers.

- Think about the example above, the interactive map that follows the path of the Civil War soldier's regiment. You could design an image map that would allow the viewer to click on battle locations. Maybe a window pops up giving you a historic photo of that location. Maybe the pop-up window includes a letter that soldier wrote while at that site.
- Or, let's say you're creating a web site about the Black Hawk War. You want to include portions of the 1804 treaty between the government and two representatives of the Sauk nation. This treaty set the stage for the conflict to occur 25 years later and is an important part of the story. Links on key words in the document could take viewers to a more detailed explanation of the word or idea.

# Non-Textual Content

## Non-Textual Content

Interactive elements, media and other non-textual context woven with text make the web site category unique. Depending on your topic, there's a variety of non-textual elements that you could include in your web site: documents, artifacts, oral history selections, quotations, photographs, paintings, video clips, songs, newspaper articles or a recording from an interview. (Remember: A single multimedia clip can be no longer than 45 seconds and you have an overall size limit of 100 MB.)

## Incorporating Non-Textual Content into your Web Site

Non-textual content should do more than just illustrate or decorate a page. Brainstorm what photographs, documents, maps, etc. will help the viewer better understand your argument. How will each element do this? Incorporate historical evidence for your viewer to examine and discover. Documents, photographs or newspapers are good way to do this. Consider lower resolution, smaller thumbnails with links to larger resolution, easily legible versions. Think about ways to use non-textual primary source elements as proof for your argument.

## Add Your Interpretation

Pages of illustrations, media clips or documents without a purpose for being on the web site will not help you prove your argument. Adding interpretive captions, rather than just descriptive, will help the viewer understand how that element builds your overall argument and gives it a purpose for being on your web site.

Similarly, putting all of your photos or media clips in a separate "photo gallery" page doesn't help tie this support to your argument. Integrate the text and non-textual elements. (Putting all the illustrations on a separate page would be similar to a documentary only having text for the first five minutes and only photographs for the last five. It would be boring and not make much sense!)

# Web Site Organization and Variation

After completing your research, your next step is to begin planning your web site. You will have to decide:

1. How you want to divide your information into different web pages.
2. How you want to organize those pages within your site.

These are important decisions that need to be made before you even begin constructing your site on the computer. How you organize and present your information gives physical form to your argument.

## Dividing Your Information into Web Pages

You have a lot of choices as to how you can divide your research and argument into different pages on your site. Time, location or topic are just a few of the general categories into which you can sort information. Different categories will help you to make different arguments through your web site. For example, a web site about the Black Hawk War could be organized chronologically, sorted by battle or by groups of people involved in the conflict. How would each of these organizational formats help or hinder a viewer's understanding of the topic?

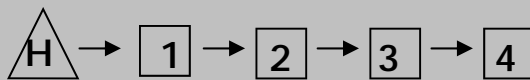
To get started, think about your information as if you were writing an outline for a paper. How would you divide up your material into major sections? How does each section support your argument? Now, think of another way you could divide the information (chronologically, topically, by location, etc.). Which system do you think will make more sense to your viewer?



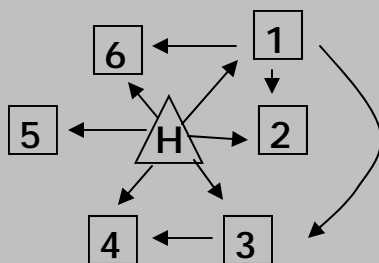
No matter how you choose to divide your information up—each page should fit together to support your thesis. How do the ideas on each page connect to the others?

## Web Site Organization

You're not just building different *web pages*, you're building a *web site*. You have to give your site an overall organization that is logical and easy to navigate. There are many ways to do this and building your site on paper first will give you a chance to play with these organizational structures before you put time and energy into construction. Here are a few examples:



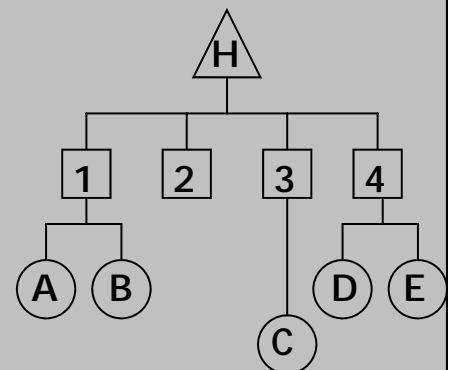
**Linear organization** assumes that a viewer is going to go from one page to the next in a very specific order.



**Spider web organization** is designed to let the viewer explore the web site in a variety of ways. Since the pages are one level deep, it assumes that information is equally important. Note: Not all pages have to link together

**Hierarchical organization** is also designed to let the viewer explore the web site in a variety of ways. However, since there are multiple levels of pages, you can organize the more important

information to be closer to the homepage and the supporting information to be deeper in the site.



# The NHD Web Site Editor



This page contains REALLY important information about creating an NHD web site for the 2010 competition. Be sure to read this carefully!



## Important Category Changes for 2009-2010

### **Rule 1: Entry Production**

All entries must be original productions **constructed using the NHD website editor beginning at the school level.** You may use professional photographs, graphics, video, recorded music, etc. within the site. Such items must be integrated into the website, and proper credits must be given within the site as well as in the annotated bibliography. The student must operate all software and equipment in the development of the website.

Beginning the 2009-2010 school year, National History Day will require web site projects to be created using the NHD Website Editor. This web site building program is specific to NHD, but functions in the same way as many other online website building programs. To access the NHD website editor and begin building their website, students must go directly through the NHD site.

A full suite of site-building tools will be available through the NHD Website Editor. While third-party tools may be used to develop objects and components for an entry, the final code must be uploaded with the NHD Website Editor tools. All objects or components constructed with third-party tools (e.g. Dreamweaver, iWeb, MS Expression) must be portable to and function correctly with the NHD Website Editor. Online help guides will be available through the NHD Website Editor to provide technical assistance to students creating websites.

All hosting will be performed by the NHD Website Editor servers. The 100 MB size restriction on entries will remain. Students are free to begin building their entries as early as September, and will work on the same website as they advance through levels of competition. With the NHD Website Editor system, students are free to access and work on their sites at any time other than judging periods, during which their sites will be closed to any editing.

### **Rule 9: Submitting Entry for Judging**

Four hard copies of a title page, process paper, and an annotated bibliography must be submitted in advance by the established deadline. **For access to the NHD website editor and up-to-date submission procedures, please visit [www.nhd.org/WebSite.htm](http://www.nhd.org/WebSite.htm).**

In order to be entered into the NHD competitive cycle, websites must be created using the NHD Website Editor beginning at the school level. Using the NHD Website Editor enables students to submit their entries for judging without mailing in discs or other media to the event coordinator. This system also enables state coordinators to manage the website category in their state electronically, including advancing websites through the levels of competition and sending links to websites to judges.

Four hard copies of the home page, a title page, process paper, and an annotated bibliography will still be required for submission.

**Be sure to consult the most current NHD rulebook  
(updated in Fall 2009) for full category rules!**

# 10 Tips for Creating a Spectacular NHD Web Site

## Tech Check

Creating a web site involves different resources than other categories. To create and submit an NHD website, you will need to use the **NHD website editor**, which is available online. This means you will need access to a computer with an internet connection. Check with your teacher and/or parent to see if technology is available at home or school. Where will you have to do the majority of your work?

## Organize, Organize, Organize!

Before putting your thoughts into HTML, put them onto paper. (You should have quite a bit of research and analysis done before you start putting your site together.) How do you want to break up your information into various pages? Will it be sorted by topic area? Around a timeline? How will you emphasize your thesis? What kinds of visual materials and multimedia would you like to have, and what can you manage technically? How can you get your audience actively involved in learning about your topic?

- **Make Your Argument Clear:** Don't hide your argument! Put your thesis on the first page as part of an introduction to the web site.
- **A Cohesive Web Site:** Remember, you're not making separate web pages—you're making an **entire web site**. A clear cohesive argument should unite everything. Don't just put something on a page "just because it's cool" or fill a page with random facts. All pages and elements should support your argument and have a purpose for being there.

## Develop Your Template

Designing your template is an important step in deciding how you are going to convey your information to your audience. The choices you make about style, fonts, colors, etc. make an impression upon your viewer even before they read a word. The NHD website editor offers you many template pages that you can use to create a web site, but think carefully about the template. Does the format of the template fit with your design and organization ideas?

Through the NHD website editor, you also have the option of customizing the template and layout you are using. Don't be intimidated by this option—the help documents within this program can offer you more information! Creating your own template for a web site doesn't mean that you have to reinvent web formats. Look at other history web sites to see what formatting they have used to communicate their information. (You can always look at their code to see how they built their site.) Taking time to create your own basic layout – header, footer, colors, fonts, etc. – that can be duplicated for the entire site.

- **Your Color Scheme: Not just your site's pretty face:** Pick colors for your background, text and links that are not just attractive, but also help your audience understand what your project is about. Your design should connect to your topic.
- **Use a Common Font:** Use a "browser safe font" like Times New Roman or Arial for your body text. This ensures that your font will be the same for each viewer. Fancy fonts can be great for highlights and titles, but they can be difficult to read and probably won't work on your viewer's computer. If you download a cool font to use in your web site, keep in mind that your viewers' computers will translate it into another font unless the text is saved within a .jpg or .gif image that you create.
- **Use the Same Basic Layout on Every Page:** Your site will be easier for viewers to use if each page has navigation buttons and content in about the same places. It's always helpful to have a header with your web sites' title on each page.
- **Strive for Clarity:** You want your viewers to understand the content of your web site, and not struggle to read it. Remember that background images can make text difficult to read and long paragraphs or blocks of text can be difficult to read on computer screens.

## The Homepage

One page of the web site must serve as the "home page." To create this page, keep in mind the following:

- Your homepage must include the names of the participants, entry title, division, and a main web site menu that directs viewers to various sections of the site.
- Don't hide your thesis! The homepage is a great place to give an introduction to your project, including your thesis. Let your viewer know right away the argument you will be making.
- Your homepage does not have to include a description of why you are creating the web site or of National History Day. Since this web site is not for the general public, your viewers will already be aware of the program and the purpose of the site. Save your words for your subject!

- Your process paper will not go on your web site but your annotated bibliography should be included as an integral part of the web site (but will not count towards the word limit).

## **Content is More Important Than Glitz**

Computers can do a lot of cool things, but think about the NHD criteria and remember the most important elements of your web site: analysis, interpretation, historical context and connection to theme. In order to make sure these ideas are clear for your viewer, make sure your web site design is easy to read and understand. Keep decorative animation and clip art to an absolute minimum and avoid “busy” background images and other clutter. It’s also a good idea to include some blank space in your pages so the viewer isn’t overwhelmed.

## **Give Credit Where Credit is Due**

As in all NHD categories, you must give credit for and make apparent which materials are not yours, such as illustrations, media, movies, applications, scripts, forms, etc. These materials should have a complete citation in the annotated bibliography. It is also a good idea to give a brief text crediting the source on the site, such as “Photo from the Wisconsin Historical Society.” Remember these brief references do not count against your word limit.

When borrowing or using someone else’s coding or scripting, you must give them credit just as you would with other materials. Please note that the credit for these materials must be given in a manner that is visible to the average user, not just in the code itself. If you are using a credits page, please be specific as to what each script or code does and its author.

When using quotations, either from primary or secondary sources, it is your job to make it clear to the judges that these are not your words. Judges will need to know this to obtain an accurate word count for your project. Furthermore, including other people’s work under the impression that it’s yours is plagiarism.

## **Test It Out**

Before you are finished with your site for judging, triple-check your site to make sure it works! Once the site has been uploaded, try testing images, links, media files, etc. You should be testing your site in a variety of internet browsers (Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc). Give yourself plenty of time to make sure it works so that you can correct any problems you find. As a web designer, the burden is upon you to make sure that your web site is in working order for the competition. It will not be the job of the judges or the contest coordinator to fix broken page links, images, etc. If elements of your site are not working, this doesn’t mean that your entry will be disqualified. The judges will, however, take non-working elements of your site into consideration as they evaluate the clarity of presentation of your project.

## **Submitting Web Sites to Competition.**

Contact your contest coordinator for the most current registration materials for registering and submitting your web site for competition as the submission procedures will be new for the 2009-2010 competition season. A few points to keep in mind:

- You will have to create your web site through the NHD website editor beginning at the school level. Creating your web site within the NHD program will allow it to be submitted for competition online.
- Your website will need to be submitted in advance of the competition in order for the judges to have adequate time to review the project before the competition. This means that your final version of the site will need to be ready by the registration deadline, usually two weeks before the competition. Once the registration deadline passes, you will be unable to make further changes to your site for that competition.

## **The Web Site Stands Alone**

When evaluating NHD web sites, judges should be able to find all the information about your topic in your web site itself. The web site has to stand on its own. Have someone who has never seen your web site look at it (a friend, teacher, neighbor, etc.). Without saying anything, let them read through the entire web site. Then, ask them a few questions to see if you have communicated your argument clearly: What am I trying to prove in my web site? What evidence have I shown to support that argument? What do you like about my web site? What is confusing to you?

# History Day Web Site Planning

Professional web designers think about building a web site like building a house. First the architect decides the important features of the house (such as how many bedrooms the house will have and how many square feet it will be). Next they draw the house on paper, plotting out the kitchen, bathroom and living room and making sure these elements are arranged in a way that will be comfortable for the family living there. Only after plans are finished and double checked does anyone pick up a hammer to begin construction. Prior planning and building your web site in the right order will save you a lot of time, energy and frustration.

## Research

As in all other History Day categories, good research is the first step and foundation for your web site. After completing your primary and secondary source research, you will have the following pieces of information ready for the web site:

- Thesis
- Connection to theme (remember, it's your job to show how your topic connects to the theme!)
- Project title

## Figure Out What You Need in Your Site

As the web designer, it's your job to decide what you want your audience to learn from your web site and to brainstorm ways that you can teach them. Using note cards or pieces of paper, write down the major ideas you have about your topic. You can layout these cards and rearrange them to understand how the ideas fit together. What categories do they fall into? What logical order should they be arranged in? How do these ideas relate to my thesis? Once you feel comfortable with these categories, they will become the pages of your web site.

- Page titles

## Create Your Blueprints

You can create the blueprints for your web site by using unlined paper to draft what will go on each page and how it will be organized.

- 1. Site Design:** What is the template for the web site? Are you going to create one yourself? What colors, fonts and general style will you use on the site? How will all the pages link together to create the entire site?
  - Page template
  - Diagram of the organization web pages created
- 2. Page Content:** What are the headings for each of the pages? What information should go on each page? Remember, drafting your text during this step in a word processing program will be much easier than writing it in the web design program.
  - First draft of text for pages
- 3. Non-Textual Content and Interactive Elements:** As you draft your site on paper, you will also have to decide what non-textual content (illustrations, media, etc.) and interactive elements you will include. What photos or multimedia are available? How will each piece help the viewer understand your argument and topic? How can you engage the viewer through interactive elements?
  - Non-textual content selected
  - Captions written
  - Interactive elements identified and planned

## Look It Over

Once you have your first paper draft of the web site ready, look it over to see how all the elements fit together. Have a teacher, friend or a family member look it over to get feedback from an outside observer before you begin.

## Begin Construction

After taking these initial steps, you're ready to begin constructing your web site. Become familiar with the NHD web site editor and start translating your ideas into reality!

# What are the Qualities of a Good Web Site?

The qualities that a judge is looking for in your NHD web site are written right on the evaluation sheet. Listed below is the same criteria judges will use to evaluate your web site. After you create your web site, go through this list and ask yourself if you've met the criteria or incorporated the information into your project.



## Historical Quality – 60% (At 60%, the historical quality of your web site is by far the most important)

- ☐ **My web site is historically accurate:** All the information in my web site is true to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ **I show analysis and interpretation:** My web site doesn't just recount facts or tell a story. I interpret and analyze my topic. My web site has a strong central thesis or argument that I prove. I can point to where I state my thesis in my web site.
- ☐ **I place my topic in historical context:** My topic didn't take place in isolation. I made sure to place my topic into historical context – the intellectual, physical, social and cultural setting for my topic.
- ☐ **My project shows wide, balanced research and I used available primary sources:** These ideas all relate to the research behind your NHD web site. Judges will look carefully at your bibliography to learn more about your research process. They want to see that you investigated multiple perspectives about your topic and to see that you looked at all sides of an issue. They are looking for research using both primary and secondary sources and to see that you used a variety of source types.



## Relation to Theme – 20%

- ☐ **I clearly relate my topic to the theme:** My theme connection is clear in my web site itself.
- ☐ **I demonstrates significance of my topic in history and draw conclusions:** My web site does more than just describe my topic. I explain why my topic is important in history or demonstrate its significance.



## Clarity of Presentation – 20%

- ☐ **My web site and written materials are original, clear, appropriate, and organized:** I have an organized and well-written project. I was careful to avoid plagiarism and I have double-checked spelling and grammar in my web site, process paper and bibliography.
- ☐ **My web site has visual impact, uses multimedia effectively and actively involved the viewer:** I thought about the overall design and organization of my web site. I chose multimedia and interactive elements to help viewers understand my topic and prove my argument.



National History Day in Wisconsin  
Wisconsin Historical Society

[www.wisconsinhistory.org/teachers/historyday/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/teachers/historyday/)  
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